

U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, LAUNDRY
NO. 2

HABS MO-1943-U

MO-1943-U

(Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Building No. 48)

(Veterans Administration Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, Offices)

(Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks
Division)

VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division

1 Jefferson Barracks Drive

Saint Louis

Independent City

Missouri

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

1849 C Street NW

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, LAUNDRY 2 (BUILDING 48)

HABS No. MO-1943-U

- Location:** Building 48, VA Medical Center, 1 Jefferson Barracks Drive,
St. Louis, Missouri
USGS Quadrangle Oakville, Missouri
UTM Coordinates 16 7257750 E 9965583 N
- Date of Construction:** 1952
- Designer:** U.S. Veterans Administration (VA)
- Contractor:** Unknown
- Present Owner:** U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Present Use:** Media Development Offices
- Significance:** Laundry 2 was built as part of an early 1950s expansion of the Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital at Jefferson Barracks to convert the facility into a hospital specializing in neuropsychiatric treatment. Laundry 2 expanded the hospital's laundry capacity and was a replacement for Laundry 1 (Building 6), which was the hospital's original laundry facility, completed in 1923. Laundry 2 continued to serve the medical center as a laundry until Laundry 3 (Building 88) was built in 1989. Since being renovated ca. 1990, Laundry 2 has been serving as offices for the medical center's media department.
- Project Information:** This project was sponsored and funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as mitigation for the demolition of buildings at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, a property that has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places via consensus determination of eligibility between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources State Historic Preservation Office.

Description:

Laundry 2 (Building 48) is a one-story yellow brick building with one main floor and a raised basement. Like many of the medical center's buildings, Laundry 2 is built on a hillside, so the basement level of the building is mostly below grade on the east (front) side of the building but fully exposed on the west side. Laundry 2 has a flat roof and features replacement doors and windows. The roofline of the rectangular northwest portion of the building is tall, whereas the south and east portions of the building have lower rooflines. The exterior is plain with little detail, and the building has a reinforced-concrete structural frame consisting of concrete posts, beams, and floor and roof slabs. Wall areas between the concrete posts are filled in with concrete block and then veneered on the exterior with brick. The interior of Laundry 2 has been completely remodeled and contains no original interior finishes, nor any remnants of the original floor plan. The building is now used as office and administrative space for the medical center's media development operation.

Laundry 2 is situated on the north end of the VA Medical Center complex, west of Boiler House 2 (Buildings 70, 70A, and 71). The overall shape of the building is rectangular, with projecting bays on the facade, which is the east wall. The facade faces an asphalt parking lot that is situated between Laundry 2 and Boiler House 2. The building's south wall faces a grass lawn and Graves Street, and the area north and west of the building is occupied by grass lawn. Laundry 2 sits close to the northern boundary fence of the VA Medical Center complex; this fence separates the medical center from the adjacent Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery.

The facade of Laundry 2 is eleven bays wide with two projecting bays, one on the south end of the facade and one on the north end. The south projecting bay is small and is only about one bay wide. The facade of this bay is blank, but scars on the brickwork indicate that it once had a large opening for a loading dock; the opening has now been filled in with brick. The north projecting bay is much larger than the south one and is five bays wide. Openings on the front of the north projecting bay include a small metal double-hung replacement window, a metal replacement overhead door, and a small flat metal door. The north projecting bay also includes two areas filled in with brick; these areas once contained a small window and a cargo door. The south side of the north projecting bay also contains a set of replacement glass and aluminum double doors.

The center portion of the facade is positioned between the two projecting bays. This portion of the facade is four bays wide and includes a set of glass and aluminum double doors with concrete steps and a recently installed blue awning. This area of wall also has two metal replacement double-hung windows. Brickwork scars indicate that the area now occupied by glass and aluminum double doors was originally a wider doorway; about half of the original door opening has been filled in with brick to reduce the size of the opening to fit the existing doors.

The south wall of the building has brick cladding, concrete coping, and four metal replacement windows. These windows are uniform in size, and each window has four lights: two small lights at the bottom, and two larger lights at the top. Since the building's site slopes downward on its west side, a significant amount of the building's concrete foundation is exposed on the south side of the building, whereas the foundation level on the facade is almost completely below grade. The basement level on the south wall of the building is composed of a blank poured-concrete surface.

Due to the sloping topography of the site, a large amount of the concrete basement is also exposed on the building's west wall. The basement level of the west wall features one set of metal double doors and two flat metal single doors. The basement level once had a window, but this window opening has been filled in with concrete. A second opening located south of the double doors may have originally been a window, but now most of this opening has been filled in to accommodate a small louvered metal ventilator.

The main (first-floor) level of the west wall has brick cladding and eight bays, the southernmost of which is shorter than the rest; the northern seven-bay portion of the wall has a taller roofline. The main level of the west wall features four four-light metal replacement windows, all located on the south end of the building; the southernmost window is smaller than the three other windows but has the same light pattern. Each window has two larger lights at the top and two smaller lights at the bottom. Variations in the brickwork indicate that the north end of the west wall once also had four windows similar in size to the three large existing windows. These four window openings on the north half of the wall are now filled in with brick. Concrete coping caps the west wall.

The north wall of the building also has a partially exposed basement level composed of poured concrete. It once had three window openings, but they have been filled in. The main (first-floor) level of the north wall is clad in brick and has one shorter bay on the east side and a taller three-bay portion on the west side. The short, east bay features a metal replacement door and a metal staircase that provides access to this door and the roof of the building. The west portion of the wall's main level once had three large windows, but they have been filled in with brick. The north wall is capped with concrete coping.

An original floor plan of the building was not found during research for this project. The original interior likely had large open work areas and would have been industrial in character, accommodating industrial-grade washer and dryers and any other machinery involved in cleaning large quantities of laundry. The building's interior was remodeled in the 1990s to serve as a media development center, once a new laundry (Laundry 3, Building 88) had been completed for the medical center in 1989. The interior of Laundry 2 (Building 48) has been completely remodeled for the media center, and there are no remnants of the original floor plan, interior finishes, or equipment. The current interior layout is divided mostly between a series of corridors opening into small offices and

conference rooms. The interior features a larger windowless room on the northeast corner of the building that has enough room to be used for larger-scale meetings and presentations. All of these spaces are characterized by gypsum board walls, carpeted or tile floors, and acoustical drop ceilings, all of which date to the ca. 1990 remodeling of the building.

History:

The construction of Laundry 2 is related to the post-World War II conversion of the VA Hospital at Jefferson Barracks from a general medicine facility to a neuropsychiatric hospital. With the end of the war, a large number of veterans required medical and psychiatric treatment, and to address this situation in St. Louis, the VA constructed the John Cochran Hospital downtown for general medicine, and converted the existing Jefferson Barracks facility, located south of the city, to a neuropsychiatric hospital. The John Cochran Hospital was built in the late 1940s and early 1950s, while initial new construction and remodeling for the neuropsychiatric facility was carried out at Jefferson Barracks in 1950-1952.

The Jefferson Barracks hospital's conversion to a modern neuropsychiatric hospital was also related to a wave of mental health reforms that occurred at the end of World War II, prompted by press accounts of abuse and poor conditions at state mental hospitals.¹ The layout of the new hospital was influenced by the "Schematic Plan for a 1,000-Bed VA Hospital," which was a general plan for psychiatric hospital facilities that recommended the types of buildings to be provided, as well as the number of floors, the bed capacity, the types of facilities to be included in each building, and the sizes for nursing wards. The plan was made public in the article "New Trends in Hospital Design," by Haun and Dr. Z. M. Lebensohn, in the February 1948 edition of *The American Journal of Psychiatry*.² Although the main focus of the Haun schematic plan was on treatment, administrative, and recreational facilities, hospitals modeled after Haun's plan also required appropriate support facilities such as boiler houses, kitchens, and laundries. The schematic plan included a laundry as a freestanding one-story building, but it did not give a large amount of detail about the size, configuration, or capacity of the laundry building.

The Function of Laundry 2 at Jefferson Barracks

Construction drawings for Laundry 2 were drafted in June 1951 by the architectural staff of the VA. All other buildings associated with the 1950-1951 expansion of the Jefferson Barracks VA Hospital were designed by Jamieson and Spearl, Architects and Engineers, of St. Louis. It is not clear why the VA decided to design this building in-house. As originally

¹ Albert Q. Maisel, "Bedlam 1946: Most of U.S. Mental Hospitals Are a Shame and a Disgrace," *Life*, May 6, 1946, 102-118.

² Paul Haun and Z. M. Lebensohn, "New Trends in Hospital Design," *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 104, no. 8 (February 1948): 555-564.

designed, the building had a fairly plain exterior, with steel industrial multi-light windows and paneled wood multi-light double doors with transoms.³ An architectural floor plan for Laundry 2 was not found, so the layout of the original interior is unclear. The likely scenario, based on the interiors of Laundry 1 and Laundry 3, is that the building had small rooms for offices, restrooms, and lockers, with most of the interior space taken up by a large open work area with washers, extractors, and dryers.

Laundry 2 replaced the smaller Laundry 1 (Building 6); due to the large size of the Jefferson Barracks hospital in the 1950s, a significant quantity of laundry had to be cleaned each day. Laundry 1 (Building 6) was constructed to fill the needs of the medical center as it existed in the 1920s, but it was not adequate for the needs of the 1950s neuropsychiatric hospital campus. Expanding Laundry 1 was not practical since the building was so small, so the VA constructed Laundry 2.

Laundry 2 continued to serve as the main laundry facility for the VA Medical Center through the end of the 1980s. Relatively few changes were made to the building from the 1950s through the middle of the 1980s. In 1989, however, the VA built a new laundry facility (Laundry 3, Building 88). During the research for this project, no documentation was found to indicate why the new laundry was constructed. However, the new facility was larger and contained more up-to-date laundry and drying machinery, which would have been advantageous. Since it was no longer needed as a laundry, Laundry 2 was remodeled during the 1990s and converted to administrative space for the VA Medical Center's media center. The remodeling included installing new windows and doors, filling in many of the original exterior door and window openings with brick, and completely gutting and remodeling the building's interior.⁴ The current interior layout of the building, with several corridors that provide access to offices and conference rooms, is a product of the 1990s renovation project. Laundry 2 is still serving as a space for the medical center's media center, but in the upcoming redevelopment of the medical center site, the building will be demolished and the site will be turned over to the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery to be used for additional burial space.

³ U.S. Veterans Administration. *Laundry Building No. 48, Veterans Administration, Jefferson Barracks*, June 1951, on file at St. Louis VA Hospital, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

⁴ U.S. Veterans Administration, Construction drawing files for Building 48, 1951-2010, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

Sources:

Haun, Paul, and Z. M. Lebensohn. "New Trends in Hospital Design." *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 104, no. 8 (February 1948).

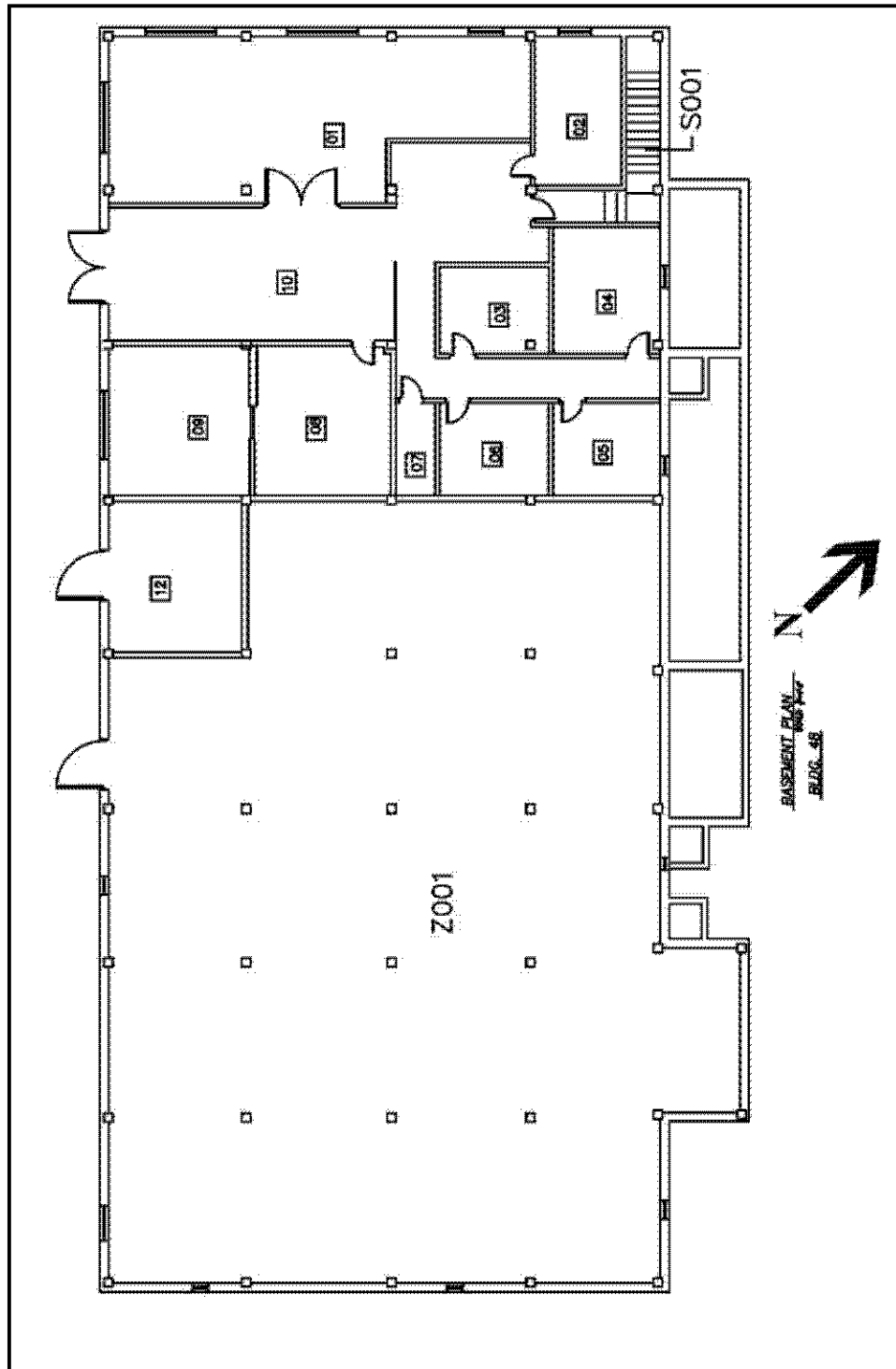
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U.S. Veterans Administration. Construction drawing files for Building 48, 1951-2010, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

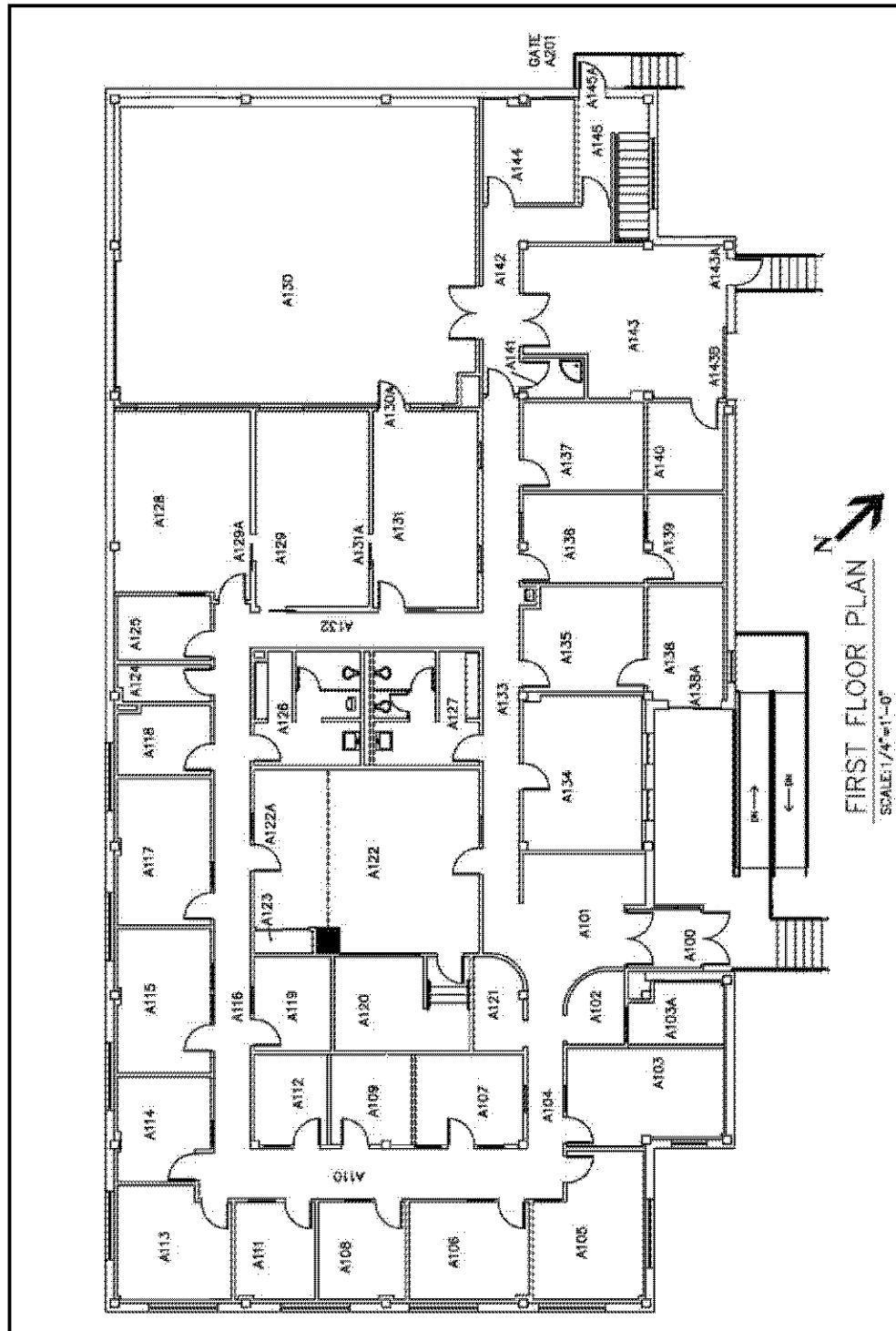
———. *Laundry Building No. 48, Veterans Administration, Jefferson Barracks*. June 1951. On file at St. Louis VA Hospital, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

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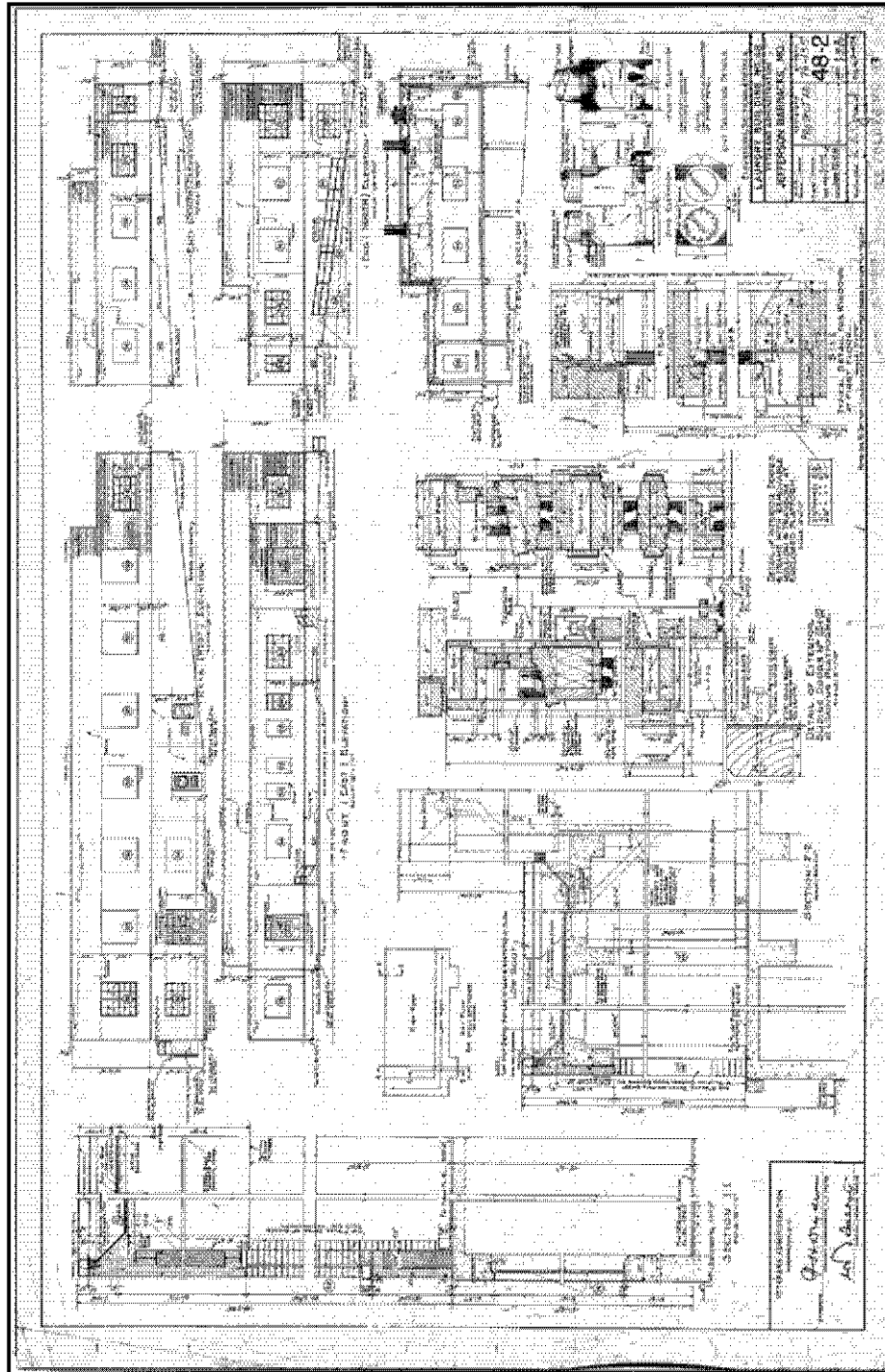


Laundry 2 (Building 48), current floor plan of basement



Laundry 2 (Building 48), current floor plan of first floor

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Original details, sections, and elevations for the Laundry 2 (Building 48), 1951